

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method of repairing a tear in body tissue comprising:
 - inserting a needle containing a retaining head therein from a first insertion position on a first outer surface of the body tissue, through the tear and to a second outer surface of the body tissue;
 - ejecting said retaining head from said ~~insertion~~ needle, said retaining head grasping said second outer surface in an engaged position; and
 - advancing an anchor coupled to said retaining head from a second insertion position on said first outer surface of the body tissue to a position at least through a portion of the tear, said anchor coupled to said retaining head by a flexible member that extends a distance along said first outer surface of the body tissue from said first insertion position to said second insertion position.
2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein ejecting said retaining head from said ~~insertion~~ needle comprises:
 - advancing a plunger within said needle toward a distal opening of said needle;
 - deploying said retaining head from said distal opening; and
 - removing said needle from said body tissue at said first insertion position.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2 wherein advancing a plunger further comprises:

guiding said flexible member along a longitudinal slot disposed along said needle.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein advancing an anchor comprises:

locating a distal end of a hollow tube on said second insertion position, said hollow tube containing said anchor therein; and

advancing a plunger within said hollow tube a predetermined distance toward said distal end thereby advancing said anchor to a desired location.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein advancing a plunger further comprises:

guiding said flexible member along a longitudinal slot disposed along said hollow tube.

6. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein locating a distal end of a hollow tube comprises:

locating said distal end of said hollow tube a predetermined offset distance from said first insertion position whereby advancing said anchor to said desired location provides a taught flexible member between said first and second insertion position.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein ejecting said retaining head and advancing ~~an~~ said anchor are simultaneously performed.

8-19. (Cancelled).

20. (New) A method of repairing a tear in body tissue comprising:
passing a needle from a first portion of the body tissue, through the tear and to an outer surface of the body tissue;
ejecting a retaining head from said needle such that said retaining head lies against said outer surface in an engaged position; and
inserting an anchor coupled to said retaining head by a flexible member from said first portion, through the tear to a desired location.

21. (New) The method of claim 20 wherein inserting said anchor comprises:
inserting said anchor to said desired location wherein said flexible member extends a distance along said first portion of the body tissue.

22. (New) The method of claim 20 wherein inserting said anchor to said desired location comprises:
inserting said anchor to said desired location wherein said flexible member is taught between said anchor and said retaining head.

23. (New) The method of claim 20 wherein ejecting said retaining head from said needle comprises:

advancing a plunger within said needle toward a distal opening of said needle;

deploying said retaining head from said distal opening; and

removing said needle from said body tissue.

24. (New) The method of claim 23 wherein advancing said plunger further comprises:

guiding said flexible member along a longitudinal slot disposed along said needle.

25. (New) The method of claim 23 wherein advancing said anchor comprises:
locating a distal end of a hollow tube onto the body tissue, said hollow tube containing said anchor therein; and

advancing a plunger within said hollow tube a predetermined distance thereby advancing said anchor to said desired location.

26. (New) The method of claim 25 wherein the body tissue is a meniscus and the tear is a tear in the meniscus;

wherein said first portion of the body tissue is a first outer surface of the meniscus;

wherein said outer surface of the body tissue is a second outer surface of the meniscus; and

wherein the desired location is in the meniscus.

27. (New) A method of repairing a tear in a meniscus comprising:

inserting a cannulated piercing member containing a retaining head therein from a first insertion position on a first outer surface of the meniscus, through the tear and to a second outer surface of the meniscus, said retaining head having a longitudinal body and positioned generally longitudinally within said cannulation;

ejecting said retaining head from said piercing member such that said retaining head engages said second outer surface of the meniscus; and

advancing an anchor coupled to said retaining head from a second insertion position on said first outer surface of the meniscus to an implanted position, wherein in said implanted position, said anchor passes at least through a portion of the tear, said anchor coupled to said retaining head by a flexible member that extends a distance along said first outer surface of the meniscus.

28. (New) The method of claim 27 wherein ejecting said retaining head from said piercing member comprises:

advancing a plunger within said piercing member toward a distal opening of said piercing member;

deploying said retaining head from said distal opening; and

removing said piercing member from said meniscus at said first insertion position.

29. (New) The method of claim 28 wherein advancing a plunger further comprises:

guiding said flexible member along a longitudinal slot disposed along said piercing member.

30. (New) The method of claim 27 wherein advancing an anchor comprises:

locating a distal end of a hollow tube on said second insertion position, said hollow tube containing said anchor therein; and

advancing a plunger within said hollow tube a predetermined distance toward said distal end thereby advancing said anchor to a desired location in the meniscus.

31. (New) The method of claim 30 wherein locating a distal end of a hollow tube comprises:

locating said distal end of said hollow tube a predetermined offset distance from said first insertion position whereby advancing said anchor to said desired location provides a taught flexible member between said first and second insertion positions to substantially close the tear.